

March 20, 2011

Government Administration and Elections Committee
Room 2200, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, Ct. 06106-1591

Dear Committee Members:

The proposed trade of 17 acres in Haddam of prime, strategic, open space public land for nearly worthless private land is a very ill conceived idea. We ask that every public official, elected or appointed, take action to defeat Bill Number 1196. This land swap proposal is detrimental for many reasons as follows:

1. It does nothing to protect the ecological and scenic assets of the Lower Connecticut River Valley.
2. It is contrary to the long established and much invested strategy of the State of Connecticut and area towns to preserve and protect the Lower Connecticut River Valley. Please review the history of the Connecticut River Gateway Commission and the Department of Environmental Protection's Open Space Acquisition Program.
3. It is unethical. The State of Connecticut acquired the 17 acres at a fair market price for the right reasons. However, the proposed replacement land is not developable and therefore of little value. Furthermore, the proposed replacement land is not even in or near the Lower Connecticut River Valley.
4. It does not benefit the citizens of the Lower Connecticut River Valley and the State of Connecticut. It does benefit a single company owned by several partners who are looking to increase their profits. Witness this quote from Jon Crane, spokesman for the partners proposing the trade - "They just want to make money. It is the American way".
5. It will have a very negative effect on the Lower Connecticut River Valley. This negative effect will further fragment the wildlife habitat, will generate more light pollution, will generate more traffic, etc. It will make the Lower Connecticut River Valley less attractive for tourists, for native wildlife, and the people who live and recreate in the Lower Connecticut River Valley. Please review the Eagle Watch Program.
6. It will certainly discourage donations. Much of the open space in the Lower Connecticut River Valley that has been protected through acquisition by the State of Connecticut has been by way of outright donation or bargain sale. If potential donors learn that their donated land can later be given to private developers, we are sure all further donations will cease.

If this proposed Bill is allowed to proceed to a full vote of the Legislature, it will put both the State of Connecticut and the elected officials who support it on a very slippery slope. We ask your Committee to soundly reject this dangerous Bill.

Sincerely,

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